

BARKING - GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP eBULLETIN 16 SEPT. 2011: REPLACEMENT BUSES; PIXC-BUSTER; CATHEDRALS EXPRESS

Unfortunately this is another quick ebulletin, I still intend to produce an update/newsletter next week.

- **FINAL REMINDER REPLACEMENT BUSES THIS WEEKEND**
- **RETURN OF THE PIXC-BUSTER**
- **ANOTHER CATHEDRALS EXPRESS**
- **REVENUE PROTECTION**
- **HELP LINE TELEPHONE**

BUSES REPLACE BARKING - GOSPEL OAK TRAINS THIS WEEKEND 17-18 SEPTEMBER

This is a final reminder that the luxury of a 15-minute train service at the weekend is over for several weeks! There is a lot of bridge works to be carried out between Woodgrange Park and South Tottenham, while new rails have been seen laying in the "4 foot" between South Tottenham and Crouch Hill awaiting installation. Details of the replacement buses are now available. A copy of the details posted on our website www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk is attached to this ebulletin.

Saturday 17 September Buses will run every 15 minutes serving all stations between Barking and South Tottenham connecting with the train service between South Tottenham and Gospel Oak.

Sunday 18 September This is more complicated. From start of service until around 12:30 Gospel Oak station is part of an engineering possession on the North London Line between Camden Road and Willesden Junction and Shepherd's Bush on the West London Line. Buses will run every half an hour serving all stations between Barking and Gospel Oak before terminating at Hampstead Heath station. After 12:30 the arrangements become the same as those for Saturday 17 September above.

RETURN OF THE PIXC BUSTER!

Older members and supporters may recall that in 2005 Transport for London (TfL) responded to pleas from BGOLUG, supported by London TravelWatch, and funded Silverlink to obtain an additional *Sprinter* train (150 121, now with First Great Western in the South West) and run two additional morning and one evening trip to relieve chronic overcrowding. PIXC is an industry acronym standing for **P**assengers **I**n **eX**cess of **C**apacity. Well, surprise, surprise, with the ending of the summer holiday period London Overground Rail Operations Limited (LOROL) brought back the PIXC buster on Monday 12 September! Using the *Turbostar* booked as spare train, LOROL are running an unadvertised relief train between two normal trains to give passengers at intermediate stations a chance to get on a train that has not filled up at Barking. As members were

advised in their flash message, the relief train starts at Woodgrange Park and terminates at Upper Holloway because there is no room for it at Gospel Oak. Full details are contained in the attached scan of a BGOLUG leaflet. A copy of the leaflet will be sent upon receipt of an SAE to the address on the leaflet. So what TfL has been telling us for five years would never happen has come to pass just as we always predicted. The numbers of peak period passengers are now in excess of the capacity of 15-minute frequency service of 2-coach trains. Although it gives us no pleasure, we can now say "We told you so!" to TfL. The problem is while this PIXC buster brings welcome relief and we will discuss with LOROL ways of increasing its effectiveness, it is not a long term solution. The timetabled service requires six of the eight *Turbostars* to be in service, one standing spare and one undergoing maintenance. If the spare is in traffic too, unless the maintenance unit is able to be quickly put into service, there is nothing to replace a failed train out of the line, so cancellations could increase. Even if electrification, platform lengthening and more rolling stock were approved by government/Mayor tomorrow, it would be a couple of years at least before passengers saw any benefit. So what to do in the interim?

ANOTHER CATHEDRALS EXPRESS

Donald Fraser, a past BGOLUG Treasurer was a passenger on the Southend to Salisbury and return *Cathedrals Express* hauled by 70000 *Britannia* on 31 August. We are pretty sure that this was the first steam hauled train over the Tottenham & Forest Gate section (Woodgrange Park to South Tottenham) since dieselisation in the early 1960s. Don reported that *Britannia* had no problems getting her heavy train over the line's not inconsiderable gradients. I managed to send a flash message to members just prior to the tour running when I learned that it was to be routed over our line and three other members in addition to myself were able to watch and photograph the train on the outward trip. What appeared to be a mother and toddlers' group meeting on the up platform at Walthamstow Queen's Road were greatly excited by the trains' unexpected (for them) passage. They, Don and several others have asked me if there is to be another steam train. The 31 August train was the first that organisers *Steam Dreams* had run from Southend. It must have been worth doing because there is to be another *Cathedrals Express* from Southend also hauled by *Britannia* on Saturday 10 December but this time to Winchester for a Carol Service in Winchester College Chapel. The restaurant and buffet car train will pick up at Southend (09:15), Basildon (09:30), Upminster (09:45) and West Hampstead (11:00) and arrives back at Southend at 22:15 after calling to set down at the same stations. Fares from Essex range from £225 to £85, while from West Hampstead they are between £199 and £65. www.steamdreams.co.uk
info@steamdreams.co.uk.

REVENUE PROTECTION

Recently I have received a couple of complaints about aggressive Revenue Protection Inspectors. If you have experienced or witnessed any examples of a lack of "Customer Care" by LOROL RPIs, please write and let me know.

HELP LINE TELEPHONE

Another “blast from the past” is the help line telephone recorded message (020 8963 6087), introduced by Silverlink along with the first Customer Information System (CIS) around ten years ago as required by the Department for Transport (DfT) as recompense for the appalling service Silverlink had provided over past years. A member has complained that the message tape is not being updated by staff in LOROL’s Swiss Cottage and it still blithely advises intending passengers that the service is operating as per the timetable on the Barking – Gospel Oak Line even when chaos reigns. The term “good service” is one greatly beloved by TfL, I often wonder what the legal definition of “good service” is? Again, please forward any examples of “duff” information to me. Thank you.

Glenn Wallis
Assistant Secretary
Barking Gospel Oak Line User Group
16th September 2011